

-16-

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of installing an instrument panel assembly in a vehicle body, comprising the steps of:

mounting a first electrical connector assembly to an instrument panel assembly;

5 mounting a second electrical connector assembly to said vehicle body;

inserting said instrument panel assembly into said vehicle body;

10 aligning said instrument panel assembly in said vehicle body such that said first and second electrical connector assemblies are aligned with one another and pushing said instrument panel assembly for electrically engaging said first and second electrical connector assemblies.

2. A method of installing an instrument panel assembly in a vehicle body, comprising the steps of:

mounting a first electrical connector assembly to an instrument panel assembly;

5 mounting a second electrical connector assembly to said vehicle body;

supporting an instrument panel assembly on an automated installation system, guiding said automation installation system to insert said instrument panel within 10 said vehicle body;

15 aligning said instrument panel assembly in said vehicle body such that said first and second electrical connector assemblies are aligned with one another and driving said automated installation system for electrically engaging said first and second electrical connector assemblies.

-17-

3. The method according to Claim 2, wherein said automated installation system includes a hydraulic cylinder for driving said automated installation system for electrically engaging said first and second electrical connector assemblies.

4. The method according to Claim 2, wherein at least one of said first and second electrical connector assemblies is mounted so as to self-align itself relative to the other of said first and second electrical connector assemblies.

5. A system for making an electrical connection of an instrument panel wiring to a vehicle body and engine compartment wiring during instrument panel installation, comprising:

- 5           a vehicle body;
- an instrument panel mounted within said vehicle body;
- a first electrical connector assembly mounted to a rear surface of said instrument panel; and
- 10          a second electrical connector assembly mounted to said vehicle body and engaged with said first electrical connector assembly;
- wherein during installation of said instrument panel within said vehicle body, said first and second electrical connector assemblies are aligned with one another such that as said instrument panel is pressed into an installed position, said first and second electrical connector assemblies are engaged with one another.

6. The system according to Claim 5, wherein said first and second electrical connector assemblies each include a plurality of electrical terminals.

-18-

7. A system for making an electrical connection of an instrument panel wiring to a vehicle body wiring during instrument panel installation, comprising:

5 a first electrical connector assembly supporting a plurality of terminals for said instrument panel wiring and adapted to be mounted to a rear surface of said instrument panel; and

10 a second electrical connector assembly supporting a plurality of terminals for said vehicle body wiring and adapted to be mounted to said vehicle body;

15 wherein during installation of said instrument panel within said vehicle body, said first and second electrical connector assemblies are aligned with one another such that as said instrument panel is pressed into an installed position, said plurality of terminals for said instrument panel wiring are engaged with said plurality of terminals for said vehicle body wiring.

8. A system for making an electrical connection of an instrument panel wiring to an engine compartment wiring during instrument panel installation, comprising:

5 a first electrical connector assembly supporting a plurality of terminals for said instrument panel wiring and adapted to be mounted to a rear surface of said instrument panel; and

10 a second electrical connector assembly supporting a plurality of terminals for said engine compartment wiring and adapted to be mounted to said vehicle body;

15 wherein during installation of said instrument panel within said vehicle body, said first and second electrical connector assemblies are aligned with one another such that as said instrument panel is pressed into an installed position, said plurality of terminals for said instrument panel wiring are engaged with said plurality of terminals for said engine compartment wiring.